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DISCUSSION.

THE DUALISM OF MR. P. E. MORE.

IT needs some temerity to attempt a criticism of either the philosophy or the social theories of a thinker so generally sound as Mr. Paul Elmer More. Yet when the assertion is made by Mr. Randolph Bourne that Mr. More's social theories are based upon modern pragmatism, and when one recalls how stoutly Mr. More opposes the philosophy of change, it seems desirable to look again at his philosophical system to discover what warrant may be found for an assertion so unwelcome to him. Mr. Bourne has pronounced a half-truth. As one studies Mr. More's philosophy, one inclines more and more to the conclusion that his theories of society and government are not the result of his philosophy, but rather that his philosophy was put together in explanation of his more important ideas. For this purpose he seems to have found it necessary to adopt in his practice many empirical and so-called pragmatic doctrines, while his desire for a principle of restraint, both upon the individual and upon society, for which modern pragmatists have made slight provision, inclines him toward idealism. Mr. More is, of course, not alone even among modern philosophers in his attempt to reconcile the discordant elements of empiricism and idealism; the history of philosophy from Aristotle to Bergson records many such efforts attended with varying degrees of success. It is the purpose of the present paper to show that the system of philosophy which Mr. More has set forth in his "Definitions of Dualism" in the eighth volume of *Shelburne Essays* is not really dualistic; that in its practical working it is partly pragmatic, and that in the last analysis it is essentially idealistic.

Mr. More does not invite non-dualists to criticize his philosophy, but by the time-honored assumption of superiority he sets it upon a height which he declares to be inaccessible to the non-dualist. "If a man denies this dualism of consciousness," he says, "there is no argument with him, but a fundamental difference of intuition, which will follow into every view of philosophy and criticism." The mystical member of this ill-matched pair is undoubtedly incomprehensible to the ordinary mind; yet, since Mr. More has after all but yoked plain matter with elusive spirit, one of its members at least is recognizable and stands our scrutiny, and it is plain to the most casual

reader that matter actually draws by far the greater share of the load. To change the metaphor, the dualistic theory is always in a state of unstable equilibrium, and although Mr. More throws much emphasis of importance upon the supernatural beam of his balance, the most valuable part of his theory inclines with all the weight of irresistible logic toward matter as the one certainty.

Mr. More avoids, however, these old terms, spirit and matter, in indicating the two poles of the dualistic universe, and I shall adopt his more definite phraseology. In the first place he conceives of matter almost exactly as the monists do (I use the word 'monist' simply as an antonym of 'dualist'), and speaks of matter, or the whole wide world, as the "flux of life." This matter he then somewhat forcibly separates into "inner desires" and "outer impressions." The term 'flux' is apparently selected to indicate the obviously changing character of the material universe. In the flux he includes the "mental activities," the reason, imagination, and memory, and the will, and an elaborate system of functional psychology. Over against these perfectly recognizable, if not entirely explicable realities, Mr. More sets his special manifestation of spirit, the "inner check," a something "within man which displays itself intermittently as an inhibition upon this or that impulse. . . . It is not the mere blocking of one impulse by another, which is a quality of the confusion of the flux itself, but a restraint upon the flux exercised by a force contrary to it."

By thus reducing spirit to its lowest terms,—an inner check acting intermittently upon the flux of matter, and by including among the powers of matter not only all mental activities but even the will, Mr. More abandons many of the contentions of Descartes and other earlier dualists and thus simplifies his problem. By so doing he does not, however, escape—though he refuses to consider—the insurmountable objections of the earlier opponents of the theory, that dualism, by definition, makes interaction between spirit and matter impossible. At times he appears to recognize an inconsistency—which he would no doubt dismiss as a paradox—for he says that the two, inner check and flux, are "coexistent and coöperative, yet essentially irreconcilable, forces." At other times he leans toward idealism and is inclined to make spirit dominant, for he says: "It may be surmised, but only surmised, that in some way the faculties themselves have been created by the action of a force within the flux obedient to the inner check, and that the regularity of their function depends upon the fulness of the control of this check." Such a

surmise is valuable only in showing the leaning of its author; the opposite may be as easily surmised, and with less difficulty established. But since Mr. More avoids this question, and since the history of philosophy adequately answers it, I shall confine my criticism to his chief contentions, that there is an inner check, that it does, somehow, sometimes, act upon the flux, and that this arrangement is somehow necessary for the ordering of human life.

Mr. More does not, however, make out a very strong case even for the existence of the inner check; his argument proceeds more easily if you will assume that point. Although he asserts that "the inner check is the same potentially in all men," he recognizes also that "the generality of men . . . are so intermittently conscious" of it as to require guidance from the more fortunate few. At the very best a good deal of suspicion must attach to a potentiality of this sort—it is too like a potential spring chicken in a basket of eggs; and no less suspicion must attend a dualism one member of which is of this dubious character. At least it seems reasonable to insist that a power of such singularity and importance as to warrant its being set off from all other powers whatever as not only wholly different from the rest of the world of experience but fundamentally opposed to it—that a power, so characterized, should be at least recognizable by all men without exception. And moreover we should like to insist that men should at least know that they possess it, since Mr. More makes it an object of consciousness. An intelligible system of philosophy cannot, of course, be based upon unperceived objects of consciousness any more than a system of dentistry can be based upon unfelt tooth-aches.

Mr. More does not shrink, however, from the dangers of proving the existence of this important factor in his scheme of the universe by the experience of the Pharisees only, and he asserts that knowledge of the inner check comes by and through its operations—that is, by and through its operations in those in whom it is more than a potentiality. We might be willing to admit this explanation of knowledge of the inner check if it belonged to the same order of existence as the will and the vermiform appendix, which certainly are used before they become objects of consciousness, but we rebel at having the sole manifestation of a different existence, and the whole basis of the dualistic theory, discoverable in so casual a way.

We must, however, for the sake of understanding this new-old philosophy, disregard for the nonce those in whom the inner check is only "potential" or very "intermittent" (we shall come back to

them later to see how they fare in life without this boon), and examine the way in which its existence is demonstrated in its possessors. "In the repeated exercise of the inner check," we are told, "we are conscious of two elements of our being—the inner check itself and the stream of impulses—as coexistent and coöperative, yet essentially irreconcilable forces." We shall not pause, since we are told flatly that it is a mystery, to question how these two "irreconcilable forces . . . coöperate and coexist," but we must ask, how is one conscious of them? Why, simply by perceiving in himself both 'change' and 'sameness': that is, "consciousness, the more deeply we look into ourselves, tells us that we are ceaselessly changing, yet tells us also that we are ever the same." This Mr. More dubs the "dualism of consciousness." But that is going too fast. In the first place we must object that the 'consciousness of dualism' is not 'dualism of consciousness' any more than 'consciousness of beauty' may properly be called 'beauty of consciousness.' Besides, the perception of 'change' and 'sameness' in the same object cannot give the object a dual character of such far-reaching significance. One's consciousness of 'change' and 'sameness' in a flowing river, for example, reveals not a dual river but different qualities in the same river. Mr. More further adds confusion at this point—though his purpose may be to avoid the difficulty of perceiving opposites simultaneously—by asserting two kinds of perception or knowing—one belonging to the flux, the other to the inner check—which are immediate, simultaneous and inexplicable. Granting the last as incontrovertible, we may certainly turn to experience and deny that one is actually immediately conscious of two orders of existence at once and with equal clearness. If monists and dualists differ upon this important question of fact, there is, of course, no argument, and the dualist will only scorn "the generality of men" whose experience differs from his.

We are thus baffled in our efforts to discover or to define the inner check. Are we then reassured by being told that the reason, itself 'an organ of the flux,' is prone to deny what it lacks terms to define? At least we know that the discovery that an idea is inexplicable, or mysterious, or even illogical has seldom in the history of the human race been a ground for refusing acceptance or belief of it. On the contrary, its mystery gives it a certain factitious value. And it may justify itself by its usefulness, and will be rejected only when discovered to be superfluous. We have been obliged to eliminate fairies, for example, from our scheme of things, not because they are any less wonderful than microbes, or electricity, or the force of gravity,

but because their place has been usurped by these scientific and rational wonders. Therefore we turn our attention to the so-called operations of the inner check upon the flux to discover whether it performs any indispensable functions from the lack of which we suffer.

We soon discover that the peculiar kind of knowing which we waived in order to discover what use was to be made of the inner check is quite as important as the inner check in the development of this system of philosophy; that both are inextricably bound up, for example, with the important problems of truth and morality. In this fashion. Upon the 'exercise of the inner check' depends 'self-knowledge,' and self-knowledge is the source of both truth and morality. In the first place, "as self-knowledge maintains a clear and unfailing consciousness of dualism, it is called insight"; and "as it denies the right of the faculties (*i. e.*, reason, memory, and imagination, which belong to the flux) to supplant this dualism, by their own abstractions and combinations, it is called scepticism." And "insight and scepticism are the two arms of truth." Which, if it means anything, means that by the 'exercise of the inner check' one is able to know in a peculiar way, and thereby gains an 'immediate vision of truth.'

This vision, of course, the generality of men are denied; they can only watch the possessor use his power. We first discover that this 'vision of truth' is not unassisted by the common faculties of the flux which every one uses; for "in all the business of life we are aided by the proper discriminations of the reason and the proper creations of the imagination." Nay, more, reason is even necessary; for it is constantly at work "discriminating the effects of the inner check in the sphere of the flux." This usefulness of reason and the other faculties tempts one to doubt the indispensability of the inner check. We begin to suspect that truth can be as safely reached by the exercise of 'right reason' as by 'immediate vision.' The more so since these two powers (which, be it recalled in passing, could never be brought explicable into coöperation) seem not to work harmoniously together. Though the action of reason and imagination is recognized as a "benefit," they are also in "continual assault upon the restraining power," that is, upon the inner check.

This conflict invites an examination of the kind of truth which each kind of knowing presents. Of the knowledge which is gained through the ordinary faculties we are told that it "may wander into fallacy and hallucination, but the sure penalties of practice prevent them from going far astray in the normal man." If there be any

obscurity here, it is cleared up by this explanation, which might have been taken from the latest book on pragmatism, for it is the so-called 'pragmatic test of truth.' "Knowledge of a particular phenomenon is reckoned accurate in so far as this general knowledge fits in with the knowledge reported by other persons." The errors of the faculties that operate in the flux, that is, are discoverable by further observation in the medium in which they occur, and truth and error are thus defined and distinguished with comparative ease.

Having discovered that one kind of knowing provides its own means of detecting and correcting its mistakes, we naturally ask how we may test the truth of 'immediate vision.' But here we meet with another unknowable. There is no way. Mr. More, however, does not raise the question in this case as he does in the other. Two explanations are possible and equally unsatisfactory. To the question-begging assertion that certain kinds of knowing carry with them their own guarantee of truth there is the objection that every hallucination, whether of sleep, spiritualism, religious enthusiasm, or pathological delusion, carries with it an assurance of truth which only further experience can set aside. In the case of the 'immediate vision of truth' such a test is emphatically denied. Another explanation, that the guarantee of truth rests in an absolute or infinite being, shelves the query, but does not answer it. After this we are disposed to cry out, with Mr. More, on those who disregard the experience which is at hand, and try to "explain the ultimate reality of things by abstract conceptions." Certainly we may conclude that in the search for truth we are better served by the faculties that belong to the flux, reason, and the tests of experience, than by the inner check and a superrational or intuitional kind of knowing.

We turn next to the field of morality where, if ever, we may expect to find the inner check indispensable. And at the outset it appears so. It is the source of character, which is the product of "disposition controlled by the inner check." Disposition is the element contributed by the flux; it is itself the result of "incalculable chance," the name which Mr. More gives to the familiar determinants, heredity and environment. In the moral world cognizance is taken of the fact that the inner check—by an equally incalculable chance—moves not in all, and we are told that, "as the common disposition of mankind is lacking in character (because of the intermittency of the inner check, of course) the will to refrain needs to be, and largely is, reinforced from without by the restraining influence of public opinion, fear of punishment, education, and mythology." Not only do these

latter aids to right conduct belong to the flux, but even the "will to refrain," we are told, belongs to the flux. The generality of men are thus abundantly provided with guides to action.

Moreover, the proper effect of this external check is a discipline which produces healthy instincts capable, under ordinary circumstances, of taking the place of character. In this fashion the inner check is removed from its position as the main element in character, and its place is taken, as it should be, by the discipline of the will. Indeed Mr. More recognizes the close similarity between the will and the inner check, and he tries to explain it by the unwarranted assumption that the will, though an activity of the flux, is the outcome of the inner check. Nevertheless he says that "at its highest development the will would appear to act automatically," and he further undermines his first contention, that the inner check is the source of character, by saying that "a man of character is one in whom a vigorous disposition is continually controlled by the habit of attention, or the will to refrain."

The inner check is thus admittedly superfluous, except possibly for emergencies. And if it be after all condemned to "rust in us unused," we may well suspect that in crises the disciplined will will be quite as dependable a guide to action.

When we consider the relation of the inner check to the question of moral responsibility, we discover that its action is either mischievous or superfluous. It is mischievous because, in spite of Mr. More's explicit assertion to the contrary, he disposes of the question of personal responsibility by actually putting the burden upon the inner check. To be sure he seeks to persuade us that he has not done so, by saying that "since the inner check is potentially the same in all men and differs only in effect as it acts or remains quiescent, each man is certainly responsible for his character or lack of character." Yet he admits that, since disposition, "out of which character is developed," is the result of "incalculable chance," we have a paradox of responsibility and irresponsibility. Mr. More is prone to dismiss a knotty question by calling it a paradox. This difficulty is even worse than a paradox. One dangerous element has already been pointed out, the dubiousness of a potential inner check of which most men are at best only intermittently conscious. That responsibility has really been shifted upon the inner check will become apparent from two more quotations in which its assumption of responsibility is explicitly asserted. "The morality or immorality of an agent is determined by the exercise or quiescence of the inner check." Before we have

propounded the inevitable question as to what determines the attitude of the inner check, we are answered that it is self-determined, and that "if the inner check permits full attention on the part of the agent, he will to the best of his experience choose the act which . . . is . . . right and virtuous." That is to say, the agent acts with full responsibility if he is unhindered by the inner check, over which, of course, his will has no control.

This assumption of moral responsibility by the inner check is interestingly paralleled by its control of the artist's imagination in the interest of a "common standard of excellence." Variety in works of art, we are told, is the result of the artist's imagination and the richness of his experience, both working in the flux. But they attain formal excellence only as "the imagination of the artist is subject to the control of the unvaried inner check." "Criticism is thus not left to waver without a fixed criterion," but by understanding dualism it gains a "constant norm of classification" amid the diversities of the flux. But it should not be forgotten that criticism by fixed standards went out of fashion rather more than a century ago, and has since been the subject of a good deal of opprobrium.

A 'common standard of excellence' that could be arrived at on the basis of experience, by studying and comparing various objects of art, would be as valuable as it would be understandable, but a standard that arises superrationally from within, under the control of an inner check, is at least open to the objection of irresponsibility, and offers no adequate explanation of the diversity of standards that undoubtedly exists. Most artists lay some claim to inspiration for their extremely varied works, but they cannot, obviously, all be controlled by the 'unvaried inner check.' Moreover there is no possibility of distinguishing true from false standards and inspiration. Why not, then, discard this very unruly and unnecessary absolute and seek a new definition and standard of beauty? Why not substitute for Mr. More's definition of beauty as the control of nature by a "force corresponding to the inner check", or the "visible image of the possible happiness of the soul", a standard of beauty based upon the comparison of beautiful objects and similar to his sometimes-used standard of truth?

Returning to the field of morals, we find, curiously enough, that although the morality of the agent depends upon the inner check, the rightness or wrongness of a particular act is determined, as truth sometimes is, by its consequences, *i. e.*, pragmatically. The inner check is definitely relegated to the background, and it again becomes

apparent that it is a superfluous activity. "The rightness or wrongness, virtue or vice, of a particular act," we are told, "is determined by the final result in pleasure or pain to the agent as an individual existing amid certain circumstances." Add to this the consideration that the agent "will to the best of his experience (that is, guided by his knowledge of the circumstances in which he acts) choose the act . . . which . . . is . . . right and virtuous," and we see that the inner check could easily have been dispensed with. Moreover the agent sometimes makes mistakes—which he certainly could not do were the inner check with its 'immediate vision of truth' in control of his actions—mistakes which arise from conflicting desires in the flux.

The agent is, however, able ordinarily to avoid mistakes and to judge of the results and thus of the rightness of particular acts by the "discriminating power of reason" aided by the "faculties of memory and imagination." Memory supplies the "material of judgment," and imagination lends "cogent realness to judgment." Furthermore, "the experience of society as expressed in precepts" forms a necessary supplement to the "insufficiency of individual experience." But reason, memory, imagination, the experience of society, are all elements of the flux. With these to aid in forming judgments of the rightness of particular acts with respect to their results in the flux, and with a will to restrain, also in the flux, which naturally chooses, under the direction of these faculties, the right act, what need is left for an inner check, which may only hinder attention and so interfere with a process that is adequate and complete without it?

The inner check is supposed to confer other benefits upon its possessor, benefits which appear, however, to be as easily attainable without it. By its aid Mr. More seeks to solve the problem of evil by claiming that the inner check confers the "only consolation" amid "the great griefs of life" which is "unmixed with shame and abasement." This is a great boon, one certainly not actually possessed by the generality of men. It were indeed well to know how it is to be gained. We are told that "true liberation" from grief "comes only with the knowledge of the universality of evil and pain in human destiny, and with the consciousness that something within us stands apart from the everlasting flux and from our passions which also belong to the flux." It is the latter statement that at once challenges examination. First, what is meant by the 'something within.' Mr. More does not explain, but he gives a cue to an explanation. He tells us that "the subjective reason deals with the whole material of experience" and is dominated not only by "outer impressions" but by

"inner desires." "By its means," he says, "we conceive our mental activities as discrete quantities." Then, by means of the "subjective imagination . . . we project our complex inner experience into nature as existences apart from the soul." That is, this 'something within' is, or should be, an abstraction, like beauty or truth, not really separable, or 'standing apart,' from the object possessing it, but only distinguishable from it as beauty and truth are distinguishable from the objects or circumstances in which they occur.

This 'something within' we may then very well designate as one phase of human experience, the human spirit, perhaps, which is superior to or triumphs over certain lower forms of the flux of which both are parts. The dualist, then, will have no monopoly of the comfort that comes from a feeling of superiority to the griefs of life. That there is no difficulty in speaking of such a superiority in the flux is evident since we recognize gradations in everything in the flux; we know that some mental activities produce more desirable results than other, *i. e.*, are better, and that right things and wrong things—right and wrong being determined by experience—exist together in the flux; and we may very well say that some things are so good as to be unharmed by the existence of evils with them in the flux.

Why then, since the qualities that belong to the flux,—reason, imagination, and memory, the will, the tests of truth and beauty, and superiority to evil, are the most valuable and only indispensable elements of this theory of so-called dualism, has not the author been willing to abandon his inexplicable and useless inner check? Because he is really not a dualist but an idealist. Because the goal of his philosophy is avowedly mysticism, and mysticism is unattainable except on the basis of idealism. Therefore, after building up a system of dualism, however tottering, he himself actually discards it for a system of mysticism which is really idealism. He denies, however, that his conclusion is idealism; he admits that it resembles idealism in that both start "from a conception of the absolute," but he asserts that mysticism is a "real knowledge of victory over the flux and not a rational denial of the flux." 'Real knowledge' is, of course, that special kind of knowing by which dualism and truth are immediately perceived, and it now serves also to give "moments . . . when the consciousness of the inner check is so overpowering as seemingly to sever the continuity of our impulsive life." As a result of these 'visionary moments' the power of the inner check is intensified, and the goal of man, through faith, is "the liberation from dualism." This I cannot believe means anything different from idealism, the

denial of matter, especially when I read further that, "life is but appearance, and this personality we call by our name is but illusion within illusion. As by the reason the inner check can be defined only in negative terms, so to the eye of faith the flux and all its manifestations, including reason itself, become the absolute negation.

We are such stuff
As dreams are made on, and our little life
Is rounded with a sleep."

Surely it is only juggling with words to call this dualism.

The special criticism of idealism is out of place here. Objective idealism is, of course, invulnerable to the attacks of reason, but it is personal rather than universal; it is a religion rather than a philosophy.

To the ordinary man, then, it appears that Mr. More has done nothing really different from what he describes when he says that the faculties "fall into pure metaphysics, or ontology, when . . . they usurp the function of consciousness and undertake to explain the ultimate reality of things by abstract conceptions." And this practice he himself condemns when he says, "no metaphysical theory will ever unriddle the secret of the world." We are inclined to conclude that this theory would be really valuable as a philosophy of life only if we could discard its so-called dualistic character and say squarely and intelligibly that the inner check is only discipline, self-control, action with reference to truth—not absolute truth, but truth depending upon experience, and to moral rightness—not absolute rightness, but rightness depending upon experience, *i. e.*, results upon society, and if we should add that this discipline depends for its authority, not upon an unknowable, but upon the only reality, the world of experience. This world, moreover, we should recognize as one of which human knowledge is growing, and which is, at least to that extent, changing itself. Such a theory would have not only the merit of conformity to everyone's experience, but all the efficacy in the government of life that Mr. More's has, together with a reliable test of truth and full moral responsibility.

To the study of Mr. More's social theories belongs the discussion of the social implications of such an idealism and of the way in which the pragmatic elements which he introduces into it enable him partly to avoid the dangers to which they lead. Enough has been said, I hope, to make it reasonably clear that a sound social theory cannot rest upon such a basis. It is undoubtedly true, as Mr. More says, that the aim of a perfect government "would be to bring the character

of the few to bear in some effective way upon the impulses of the many," but it is equally certain that one does not, nor can, establish an "aristocracy of justice" by turning over the reins of government to the privileged possessors of a special revelation not vouchsafed to those they govern, nor yet to be questioned by them. Progress does not lie in the direction of a mediaeval pontificate nor the 'divine right' of kings. But at the expense of consistency in his philosophy Mr. More has effectively escaped the logical results of his theory by showing that character does not really depend upon his special revelation, the 'inner check,' and thereby leaving room for the establishing of an 'aristocracy of justice' based upon personal discipline and social responsibility.

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